



## Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

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**Guests:** Germaine Nelson, Rob Broccolo

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**Questions or Feedback:** [thefix@oatey.com](mailto:thefix@oatey.com)

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**Katherine:** Welcome to *The Fix*, the podcast made for the trades where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry including career paths, job site stories, overcoming challenges and everything in between. I'm your host, Katherine, a marketer here at Oatey with my co-host and friend Doug, one of Oatey's resident experts in all things trades. *The Fix* is more than a podcast. It's a community, a community built to support tradespeople and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation. All right. We've got one more podcast recording for Ambassador Fest, and it's going to be a good one.

**Doug:** I'm going to tell you something, these two guys that are in here today, I just get excited just thinking about them.

**Katherine:** [laughs].

**Doug:** I know I'm going to laugh several times and I don't even know what to expect to come out of their mouths, to be honest with you. This is like a preempt to Oatey Raw someday.

**Katherine:** I hear you. We're still staying on the whole Oats team, right?

**Doug:** Yes. This is our number three of the Oats series, which is our Oatey Ambassador team series.

**Katherine:** Love it. Well, welcome Robert Broccolo and Germaine Nelson.

**Robert Broccolo:** Thank you for having us.

**Germaine Nelson:** Thank you.

**Katherine:** You got it. Both Rob and Germaine have been a part of the Ambassador program. This is actually both of your second year returning back to Oatey University Ambassador Fest.

**Robert:** We're excited.

**Katherine:** Love to have you guys here. We want to talk a little bit to both of you today about how do you manage and work through this work-life balance. Both of you have businesses, families, young kids at home. It's a lot going on. I think our listeners could probably really probably learn a little bit of things to do and maybe some things not to do. Would love to open up the floor and really talk through, how do you manage your time effectively between running your plumbing business and then spending that quality or meaningful time with your family. You want to kick us off, Germaine?

**Germaine:** Get you one woman and stand behind her.

[laughter]

**Katherine:** Well, there we go.

**Doug:** Well, that was the short episode.

[laughter]

**Katherine:** Shortest one yet.

**Germaine:** It's tough. A partner is definitely a great help because sometimes we're out late, sometimes we're not. The kids, they have different activities, baseball, ballet, whatever they want to do. Managing it, it can be tough doing it by yourself. If you are a single man I suggest-- I don't know what to suggest, honestly. That's the biggest thing. My wife, she's a great help. Without her, I don't think I could do it. I'll tell you a story. She went out of town a couple weeks ago.

**Katherine:** Sure. You had to do it.

**Germaine:** The kids went to school without lunch.

[laughter]

**Katherine:** Did you get the call from the school saying they--

**Germaine:** Yes, I got the text message. I'll show you. The teacher said, "Arianna says she don't have lunch." I'm like, "Ah. I'm on my way."

[laughter]

**Germaine:** It's real tough doing it by yourself.

**Katherine:** It is.

**Doug:** I'm going to tell you. I remember back my wife, she took a Mental Health day. She left me with all three kids. I'm going to be honest with you, it was the most stressful time of my entire life.

[laughter]

**Doug:** She came home, I think they had the wrong clothes on. I don't even know if they ate that day.

**Katherine:** They were still alive, right?

**Doug:** They were still alive.

**Katherine:** That's what matters.

**Germaine:** That's all matters.

**Katherine:** How about you, Rob?

**Robert:** For me, I grew up with my father working every single day, all day to build to what we have now. I had a resent-- or not a hatred or anything like that. I always wondered why he wasn't around as much, but he was working so hard for us. Now, as I got older and have kids and I have a great wife, I love her to death. She does everything same as Germaine. You need a good teammate and a good partner. I slowly realize that you're doing everything for your kids and you're trying to work, and it's hard to get the balance, but at the end, the end goal is worth it. My father working all those years, I didn't get it until I got older.

Now that I have my own family, it's like I still got to do the same grind and the same hard work that my father put in for our family, for ours. Seeing as how he did it before, and now that I have it, I try to balance it more. Yes, I need to work, bring the money home and do as much as I can, but I also need to make sure I'm there for the sporting events and the school events. I try to schedule it the best I can. My father didn't have that benefit because we had nothing. He built everything and because of my father, now I have the ability to have my business and do everything but manage my time better. Learning from not his mistakes, but he went about everything.

**Katherine:** It's great perspective, and it allowed you to learn what you wanted to do a little bit differently.

**Robert:** I love my father, and he did everything for me. The best father I could ever ask for. Learning from how I grew up and how he managed everything, it's like now I can make it better for myself. Yes, I need to work hard. I need to make everything, but I need to make the time for my wife, my kids and make sure that--

**Katherine:** Puts it in perspective.

**Robert:** My wife's a great teammate, and we do everything together, and she's amazing, but she does way more than I do. I work hard all day, but like you guys said, I can't handle two hours of [unintelligible 00:05:21].

**Doug:** I know you meant that.

[laughter]

**Robert:** My daughter yells at me that I'm not doing the shampoo rub, I'm not doing this, I don't brush your hair right. I just don't know how to do anything.

**Germaine:** Oh, the hair don't get brushed. We don't brush it.

[laughter]

**Doug:** I always love when the kids remind you, "Mommy doesn't do it like that." Like, "I know."

**Katherine:** Along those lines, and what are some of those strategies or techniques that you use to set those boundaries? Are there things like, "Hey, I know for my own self because everyone has that work-life balance? I set these two hours where it's even marked family time. Sure, once the kids go down, maybe I'll pop back on and I'll do a little bit of work. Have you guys established any of that where you set a little bit of boundaries with your teams or with work?"

**Germaine:** With my teams, yes, I set boundaries. I had a technician who used to always FaceTime me. I told him, "Don't FaceTime me ever again."

[laughter]

**Katherine:** He wanted to see your face.

**Germaine:** Yes. I pay you, I pay your bill, don't FaceTime me.

[laughter]

**Germaine:** When it comes to that, before, it was hard, though, because right now it's getting lax where I have a team, I'm not on the phone as much, and my myself. I would be up late, two o'clock in the morning, still doing work, things like that. The wife, the kids, everyone's asleep. Because I felt like I worked better when everyone was asleep. The phone isn't ringing. The kids aren't crying, the wife not asking me to do this. Pour a glass of wine and this and that. Everyone's asleep. The phone's not ringing, and I can work. Now, with that balance during the day, I can pretty much get a lot of the work done.

Once the kids go down, me and the wife we kick back sometimes. Sometimes she gets on, but we chill, and then you look up, it's one o'clock in the morning, and you got to get up at 5:00 in the morning. You like, "Listen, that's enough."

[laughter]

**Robert:** I haven't figured out the full balance yet. I do my best to make sure. I have such high goals and ambitions and things I want to do for my family, for the business and build an empire for my kids that I'm nonstop balls to the wall every second. My wife is the one that-

**Katherine:** Grounds you.

**Robert:** -if I get the attitude that I should probably stop working. If there's an event coming on and she's texting me like, "Are you going to be there?" I'm like, "I should probably make sure that I make the time." My wife is the one that keeps me in line in all aspects of it. I try my best. Like I said, I try to learn from my father and I do the best I can and I try to make it mentally prepared. My wife is the one that makes sure it gets done.

**Katherine:** There's got to be with all of that, there has to come stress and pressure.

**Germaine:** Oh, yes. Absolutely.

**Katherine:** How do you manage that stress and pressure? Is there a hobby, a sport? Is it friends? What is it?

**Robert:** I like being at these kind of events. Working with other guys that are in the industry and do the same thing and deal with the same kind of stress. It's nice sitting with someone like Germaine, who does the exact same thing. It might be in different areas, but we deal with the same stresses, so it's nice to unwind and relax with like-minded people. I also love playing golf or something. My phone still rings, so it's not as relaxed as this, there's no way I'm working. I'm in Cleveland right now. It's like I can enjoy a couple days. I'm at Expo, I can just relax and hang out with people.

**Katherine:** That's great.

**Germaine:** Mine is pretty much friends, the camaraderie of friends. I had a point where one of my boys, he opened up a restaurant. We would go every Wednesday. My wife one day, she says this every Wednesday thing, so then I didn't go one Wednesday. She noticed, she said, "Why didn't you go?" I said, "Because you told me that you had an issue basically with me going, but that's my time to decompress around my friends." I can sit downstairs and have a drink or watch the games, but y'all still in my ear.

**Robert:** It's not the same.

**Germaine:** It's not the same. Once I stopped, she realizing and she was like, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I understand, blah, blah, blah." With the friends, we decompress that way. Sometimes they might come to the house, we chill in the basement, but we go to the restaurant, sit at the bar, relax, kick back a few.

**Robert:** It's hard with a wife and kids or any situation where you're you want to have that compressing time, but then it's like, "Am I leaving my wife at home with the kids even longer than while I'm working all day? Now I'm going to go do decompress." Like when you said, when she said that, it's tough to actually make the time to do something every set week with your friends, have fun.

**Doug:** What do you guys do on a daily basis? What about when you take lunch? What do you do?

**Germaine:** What lunch?

**Robert:** I don't take lunch.

**Germaine:** We don't take lunch.

**Doug:** See, I knew you guys were going to say that. That's why I asked the question because I tell you that's one of the things that I found throughout my career. I didn't know when to shut it down during the day for a brief moment of time to reset. I can tell you from experience, take that hour for lunch. Take that half hour for lunch, even if you're not going to eat, shut that phone off for a minute. Trust me, it's going to record a message if they send it to you. Get that time for yourself to reset. Now, you told me that you don't reset on a daily basis. Is there something you do on a monthly basis where you step away?

**Germaine:** Yes, I go get massages.

**Katherine:** Nice.

**Doug:** I love this guy.

**Katherine:** Oh, come on with you. How long?

**Germaine:** I get massages. Before, I didn't do it, but my back's so messed up from plumbing. I started doing it and my wife, she was like, "Every month you need to go." I started going once a month. Now I go twice a month.

[laughter]

**Germaine:** It's cool to just relax and yourself snore.

[laughter]

**Germaine:** It is cool, man. It helps. It's not as bad as it used to be, so it helps.

**Doug:** I'm glad to hear you say that. What about you, Rob?

**Robert:** I don't do much to be honest with you. I try to play golf if I get a free moment, but I'm just so nonstop that-- the only free thing that I have that relaxes me, to be honest, is at one o'clock in the morning when everyone's sleeping and completely done, I'll play a video game for an hour. That's my only way of not actually looking at my phone as easy as it sounds to say, take an hour and shut your phone off. That will never happen for me.

**Katherine:** No, but that's a great way, video game.

**Robert:** 1:00 in the morning, I know no one's supposed to be calling me at that point. My wife's sleeping, my kids are sleeping. I could just focus on the screen, and it's like, I don't care about anything for one hour. That's the only way, I just don't-- even if I'm on the golf course, someone's still calling me or bothering me or I'm worried. That's the only time I get to--

**Doug:** Both of you guys have such a big presence on social media. If you think about it, you could go 24 hours a day, 365 days a year without shutting down.

**Germaine:** Absolutely.

**Doug:** Do you think that's healthy?

**Robert:** No. It's definitely not healthy.

**Doug:** When you're building your successful career, you're building that legacy for your family then to take-- [crosstalk]

**Katherine:** See, look at that. Dang, phone just ran.

**Doug:** I saw it.

**Katherine:** We only got 11 minutes in.

**Robert:** You need to take my Air Pod.

**Doug:** He answered that phone so fast that I don't even think it'd finished vibrating the first time.

[laughter]

**Robert:** That's how it's.

**Doug:** If he was in the old West, he'd be a great gunslinger.

**Katherine:** I love it.

**Doug:** Let me tell you.

[laughter]

**Doug:** The thing is, if your kids were to take over your business someday, Rob--

**Robert:** Oh, they will.

**Doug:** They will. Do you want them to have a good work-life balance or do you just tell them, "Hey, you should be on this phone all day."?

**Robert:** The goal is if I work hard enough and I do everything properly, I'll sacrifice myself that when it comes time for them to take over, they won't have that stress.

**Doug:** Did your dad sacrifice for you?

**Robert:** Yes.

**Doug:** Are you being like your dad was?

**Robert:** Yes.

**Doug:** How do you think your kids are going to be seeing you do what you do?

**Robert:** Well, my mentality is to try to fix from one step to-- again, at the end, maybe my son will have to learn a little bit from me and maybe it'll be the fourth generation or the fifth generation that gets it. It's not going to happen overnight, but my

grandmother came here from Italy with nothing, sacrificed to make sure my father and everyone had stuff. My father sacrificed every day of his life to make sure I could have what I have now.

**Doug:** Sure.

**Robert:** In my head, I want to sacrifice, not that I want to give up my health and my days, but I put in that work so that my kids, when they get old enough, never have to work a day in their life.

**Doug:** Trust me, I'm not judging you at all. I think your work ethic--

**Katherine:** No, because very similar story sitting across from me right now.

**Doug:** Yes, and I understand that. I just missed so many things, and I've shared them with Katherine off the podcast. I've shared so many things that I've missed because I made those sacrifices.

**Robert:** See, I make sure I make the time to make it to every event, but-

**Doug:** That's good.

**Robert:** -at the end of the day, I say to myself, "I want my kids to have everything. Same for my wife and everything." If I have to work every single day to make sure that they have more than I ever had, which I had a pretty good life, it's worth it for me.

**Katherine:** Well, let's talk a little bit about technology then, because obviously the world of technology, not just in the tools that you're using to do your job, but also in how you run your business has to be changing and helping. I've seen posts with you where you're in your car and your laptop doing jobs and what's some of the technology that's helped you and do you feel like technology is-- and that's probably some for you, too, Rob, from your father to you is technology's probably helped you with your business as well. Do you see that? What are some of the things that have really helped you in this space?

**Germaine:** Technology helped me a lot. It helped me a lot run the business. It's like my staff that answer the phone, they're doing scheduling. They're in California. They're not even in Washington DC. I don't have to-- and they can-- my system mirrors, it mirrors each other. If I do something in the system, they can see it almost immediately. If they do something, I can see it immediately and I have to clear everything, but just that technical point of them not being able to, or them not in the same state and still being able to help me run this business and relax a little bit is great. Technology is a big thing. Even in plumbing technology is a big thing. I do training all the time when it comes to the technical part of plumbing.

**Doug:** Both of you guys you do the sewer work, right?

**Germaine:** Rob do more sewer work.

**Robert:** I'm more sewer underground.



**Doug:** Just cameras themselves.

**Robert:** Now we do a lot of pipelining.

**Doug:** Oh, do you?

**Robert:** Which is a big change in technology versus having to dig from A to B with your excavator, rip up the yard. We can shoot a new pipe from A to B without digging anything up. Just each year the technology gets more advanced that you're started with ambient, using air to cure, goes to hot water or steam, and now they're at blue light and UV where you can just flip a light switch-

**Doug:** That's amazing.

**Robert:** -and carry the liner with no stress, no worries. The technology nowadays is crazy that I can't imagine in 5, 10 years how much different it's going to be. I'm sure when you started plumbing.

[laughter]

**Doug:** When I started plumbing, you were in there with a cable and you're trying to feel what the heck is going on?

**Robert:** There was no ProPress.

**Doug:** No. None of that.

**Robert:** No MegaPress.

**Germaine:** We started back in 2002 when I started it, the technology didn't exist. It didn't exist. The only technology you had was a phone.

**Doug:** Oh, you guys--

**Germaine:** You were still writing invoices. You still had to give three copies, carbon copy. My son probably don't even know what a carbon copy is.

**Katherine:** No, heck no.

**Germaine:** But he knows what a PDF is.

[laughter]

**Robert:** Even at Oatey, you guys have shower drains you can't even see. That wasn't around what, 5, 10 years ago where you look in the shower and you're like, "Where's the water drain to," but just now it's just so advanced and all these different ways that everything works that everything just gets better every single year no matter what it is.

**Germaine:** You have to evolve as well. That's what keeps you elite because a lot of plumbers don't evolve when it comes to the technology, which I don't mind because--

**Robert:** You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

**Germaine:** But you can.

[laughter]

**Robert:** Those old dogs don't want to learn.

**Katherine:** They got to be willing to learn.

**Germaine:** They don't want to learn, which is okay because the old dogs, they just call me.

**Robert:** That's true.

[laughter]

**Robert:** If you notice when you go to those trainings and when you're going to all these expos and stuff, it's mainly our age class. There's not 70- 60-year-old men that have been plumbing their whole lives, caring to learn about ProPress because they're all solder and that's just the way they're going to do it. They're going to install it the way they've been doing it for 40 years and you're not going to tell them any different. Guys like me and Germaine will go train and learn every single aspect of new technology and we'll run circles around it.

**Germaine:** Yes, absolutely.

**Katherine:** Allows you to be faster, more nimble also lets you to be able to provide the best service you can, too, for your customer at the end of the day. We always typically talk about the trades and the challenges that we're having with getting more people into the trades. I ask you this again from even probably from last year, where do you hope to see the trades in the next 15, 20 years?

**Germaine:** It's hard because right now the trade is not dying, but I think they said the average age is 55 of a plumber right now. The kids, they look at what you have. I was having this conversation, I think yesterday. They look at what you have as a master plumber and they're like, "I want that. I want the houses. I want the cars, I want the vacation." I tell them when I started, I made \$5.25 an hour, and I got a quarter raise every six months. You don't get here overnight. I would like to see more young guys coming to the trade and do what Rob is doing and train the generation up so that it will last because we going to get old.

**Robert:** Unfortunately.

**Germaine:** Yes, unfortunately, we're going to get old, and you need someone to carry the torch. Rob's son, he might want to do plumbing, but I know my son don't want to do plumbing. I know it already.

**Robert:** My son's going to be forced no matter what.

[laughter]

**Robert:** I don't care if he becomes a lawyer or a doctor. He's running that company.

**Germaine:** I sacrificed the baseball games. I say what I got about 8 years, he's 10. He probably can go to the MLB in eight years.

[laughter]

**Robert:** Good goal.

**Germaine:** You still want to see the trade thrive.

**Robert:** Unfortunately nowadays nobody wants to work in federal, but I would hope in 10, 15 years, and I think it slowly progressed that I think tradesmen are going to become the new doctor or lawyer because they're going to realize how much they need us. The value of us is going up, our pay is going up. When you get people that make that wise comment like, "What do you think you're a lawyer? How much you charge?" Eventually, buddy, it's going to change to that factor where it's not lawyers and doctors at the top of the pay scale and the top of going to school. That's what you have to be in life.

You can make the same kind of money being a plumber and electrician and a carpenter or whatever. It's just a matter of how much work ethic you're willing to put in. That's the problem is when I grew up, my father worked every single second of every single day. The generation of men and women back then are totally different than it is now where everyone's-- and technology has something to do with it, too, I'm sure where people get a little lazy. I would hope in 10 to 15 years that the trade turns into where we go up another notch and we started at the bottom. Maybe we're in the middle now and eventually, we get into that top tier where people go to school and say, "Yes, I want to be a lawyer, doctor, maybe I'll be a plumber. I'll make the same kind of money, and I'll work with my hands and I'll do this. I think a lot of these places need to get more into the schools.

When I was in school, they'd have a guy come in there and rip a telephone book or give you some kind of speech like, "Poor me," and try to boost your morale and try to teach you about things. It would be nice if they had a tour where they went to each school and they just showed you just the general basics of what the income is. How much work's involved. You don't need to go to co-- because when I went to school, if you didn't go to college, you were a loser. If they gave you the option to say you could do this or this and still make the same amount of money, put yourself in less debt.

If they gave you just an option where they're right in front of you, explaining it to you, I think it would change a lot more aspects versus hoping somebody sees you on social media or hoping they run into another trades guy to say, "You know what, this might be a good career." It's not presented to them at school. I love seeing on the internet now, people doing signing days. Like, "Oh, they're going to join this plumbing company,-

**Katherine:** It's awesome.

**Robert:** -they're going to sign in high school."

**Germaine:** Yes, it's nice.

**Robert:** I'm like, "That's incredible." I wish they had that when I was in school where it was like you kind of got the boost to be like, "I'm going to be a tradesman. Hell yes."

**Katherine:** There are more and more nonprofits and more and more organizations that are trying to penetrate into the schools to keep that conversation going alive. That's something we want to keep trying to do.

**Robert:** If that's happening now in 10 to 15 years, maybe they'll make a big change. Things like this, the podcast and having ambassador events and getting more people that are in the trades at our age involved in getting it out there. I feel like eventually, it should grow. We hope.

**Katherine:** Yes, for sure.

**Germaine:** I go into the schools, do career days. Different things like that. Not as often as I should, but I try to go enough and show the kids that plumbing isn't just-- I have a strategy. When I go to these career days, I wear nice things. I have a nice watch, I wear the watch. I have a nice pair of shoes, I wear the shoes. Because when they see plumbers, they see dirt. Right?

**Katherine:** Oh, sure. Have a perception.

**Germaine:** Then the kids start asking me, they're like, "Well, how did you get this?" I'm like, "I'm glad you asked." Then we go from there.

**Robert:** It's on us to change the image. Like you said, you were making \$5 an hour and then look what you have now.

**Germaine:** I'm at \$6 now.

[crosstalk] [laughter]

**Doug:** You're at \$6.25.

**Germaine:** I'm at \$6.25.

[laughter]

**Katherine:** Well, I think it's great, and I applaud you, because going into the schools because I truly, and I say this on this show often that I do believe that it starts in our homes, in our communities, in our neighborhoods. Starting in your own community and bringing awareness is where it's going to take place and continue to grow and grow and grow. Thank you both for your time today. Thank you for your support and passion for Oatey and we so appreciate everything you do for us.

**Doug:** You definitely did not disappoint us. We did learn that Germaine is very successful because of his wife.

**Katherine:** That's right.

**Germaine:** It is.

[laughter]

**Robert:** My wife is very important.

**Katherine:** Got it. Thanks, guys.

**Robert:** Thank you very much.

**Germaine:** Thank you.

[music]

**Katherine:** Thanks for joining us on this episode of *The Fix*. Be sure to follow us on your favorite podcast platform so you don't miss our next conversation dropping every Wednesday. If you have feedback about the show or a topic you'd like to see covered, send us an email at [thefix@oatey.com](mailto:thefix@oatey.com) or give us a shout-out on social media we would love to connect with you. Don't forget, you can get your daily Fix by visiting [oatey.com](http://oatey.com) and we'll catch you next time.

[music]

**[00:23:51] [END OF AUDIO]**